

# Design studio hosts Jeff Park Forward's meeting on regional plan

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by BRIAN NADIG

The conversion of the former Semrow office building at 5483 N. Northwest Highway into a shared space for creative businesses and a regional plan for the Chicago area were discussed at the April 20 meeting of Jefferson park Forward.



"I'm looking for it to be a neighborhood place for artistic thinkers," said Anemone Creative owner Jessica Petty Smith, whose great aunt owned the one-story building for 50 years. "It's important for me to reinvent this space."

Smith hosted the meeting at her floral design studio inside the building. The neighborhood organization holds its monthly meetings at different locations in an effort to showcase local businesses.

Smith's company designs floral arrangements for weddings and corporate events and provides customized, seasonal floral and plant installations at homes, including designs for terraces. The studio also hosts design classes for residents.

The meeting included a presentation on the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's "On To 2050" comprehensive regional plan, which is slated for adoption in October of 2018.

The agency has set up iPad kiosks at 24 locations in the metropolitan area in which users can learn and comment on five "alternative futures," which taken into consideration climate change, constrained resources, a transformed economy, innovative modes of transportation and the establishment of more walk-able communities.

Currently kiosks are available at Wright College and O'Hare Airport, but an updated list is available at [cmap.illinois.gov](http://cmap.illinois.gov). The agency's Web site also offers online surveys in which feedback can be given on each of the alternative futures.

CMAP communications and outreach representative Jane Grover said that the Chicago region could experience a population growth as residents from the south and southwest relocate to the Midwest as climate change leads to worsening conditions of excessive heat and drought. In other regions, severe flooding could become a problem, Grover said.

Concerns were raised at the meeting that the dismantling of environmental protection rules by the Trump administration would be major setback for efforts to combat climate change. "We don't have an EPA," a woman said.

The 2050 plan also is exploring the desire for more people to live in neighborhoods where they can walk to stores, restaurants and entertainment venues. Research for the plan shows that 63 percent of millennials and 42 percent of seniors would prefer not owning a car, Grover said.

Several residents said that one of the keys to a walk-able community is access to public transportation which runs frequently and all hours of the day because long waits can deter people from using buses and trains.

On -demand, driverless shuttles which pick up commuters and take them to a train station could be an option in the future, Grover said.

The plan also will examine how changes in technology could transform the economy, requiring a workforce with a new set of skills. A survey taken among the residents at the meeting showed that access to higher education and job training would continue to play an important role in the economy.

In other matters, a recent pub crawl sponsored by Jefferson Park Forward raised about \$1,700 for the organization and an additional \$520 for Chicago Canine Rescue. About 80 people attended the event.